

Ephesians Chapter 6 v 10 - 18

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 January 2016

Preacher: Graham Hilton

[0 : 00] If you've got one of the new Pew Bibles, you'll find that on page 967.

And we're going to read the... Sorry, I've got the wrong one. Can you send me to Ephesians 6, please?

Which is found on page 1177. Okay, I got it wrong. Let's go to Ephesians 6. I'm going to read from verse 10.

This is the Apostle Paul speaking to the Ephesian church. He says, finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[1 : 19] Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.

Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.

With the breastplate of righteousness in place. And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

[2 : 21] With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

For which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should.

Amen. Well, let's turn to God's word again and we'll turn to Matthew 4, 9, 6, 7 in the Pew Bibles.

Let's just read the section which is headed, Jesus is tested in the wilderness. This follows directly from the baptism of Jesus and the Father saying, this is my son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.

And I think it is an important principle in our Christian lives that whenever there is, in one sense, an affirmation or a commitment to God, as it was in the case in the Lord's and his baptism, then temptations come and trials come.

[3 : 44] Many of you have been baptized will experience that, that it's a glorious time. And yet there follows very often, very often soon afterwards, a time of testing.

So, Matthew 4, verse 1. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.

The tempter came to him and said, if you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

And Jesus answered, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down.

For it is written, he will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against the stone.

[5 : 00] Jesus answered him, it is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him, away from me, Satan, for it is written, Then worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. Turn to Ephesians 6. Got that right? Please turn to Ephesians 6 and the passage that we read, which is verses 10 to 20. Ephesians 6. Every person that has ever lived is engaged and has been engaged in spiritual warfare. It's true for people who are Christians and it's true for people who are not Christians.

[6 : 22] Many people believe in the existence of God, and many of those who believe in the existence of God also believe in powerful forces, evil forces at work in the world.

And Christians call this work spiritual warfare. And it is the invisible conflict behind the visible things that happen in this world.

There is spiritual warfare behind everything. In politics and families. In homes and relationships. Even warfare within ourselves, within our own hearts and our own beings.

And this power at work is named Satan. Satan is the name, one of the names that is given to this force that is at work in the world.

And he uses our fallen sinful nature against us so that we willingly do his work, which is really to transgress and overturn God's laws.

[7 : 34] We are still responsible for all our sins, but behind our sins is someone who is able to manipulate and use our fallen nature to do his will.

He fuels us into thinking that we're all essentially good. And that our own problems, the world's problems and our own problems, can always be solved and resolved by our own good and our ingenuity.

And rather than primarily rest in the first place to a loving and caring God. In Corinthians 2, 4, 4, Paul says this.

He says, The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. And it is God who has sent the light of the gospel, the message of Jesus Christ, to draw us out of this blindness, out of this darkness, into his marvelous light.

[9 : 00] Paul again in Colossians says, Once you were alienated from God, and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you wholly in his sight without blemish and free from accusation.

It is possible to stand before God, sinful as we are, free from accusation, free from all sin and all guilt.

The Bible uses the picture of spiritual warfare many, many times, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. There are two quotations that I want to just read to you regarding his protege, Timothy, his son, his spiritual son.

And he says this, Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.

[10 : 27] Fight the battle well and avoid shipwreck. The other instances in 2 Timothy, he says this, Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. And this is an instruction regarding staying focused.

Stay focused. Don't get involved in civilian pursuits. You're called to a ministry, which is far, far more important. Last Sunday, we had, as it were, the annual verse, Romans 8, 31, Since God is for us, who can be against us?

And I got to thinking about, well, who can be against us? Who is against us? And this morning, what I want to do is to take a closer look at who or what it is that is against Christians.

And I've got four headings. The first one is, Know Your Enemy. The second one is, Know Your Weaponry. The third one is, The Fog of War.

[11 : 46] And the fourth one is, Who Will Win. I just want to go through that, using Ephesians 6, as a template for these topics, these titles.

Know Your Enemy, verses 10 and 11 of Ephesians 6. Finally be strong in the Lord, and in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Well, we live in a world where every week, there seems to be a report of something, which is either opposed to Christianity and Christians, or appears to shift the balance away from what is loosely called a Christian nation.

This week, we've seen the moving of examination times to fit the dates to avoid Ramadan for those who are Muslims.

It seems that children are not called to fast, but changes have been made in order to fit in with that. It's a shift away from a centrality of Christian things.

[13:07] Jeremy Paxton, in his Arrogance of University Challenge, will often say, well, ask a question and say, well, in 49 BCE.

Does anybody know what BCE is? It means before Christian era. Or, ACE means after the Christian era. And, it replaces BC and AD.

And so, subtle changes like that are often there and happening all the time. Things we can't do anything against. Yesterday, it was announced that a judge, a UK judge, is now assisting in the sitting of Sharia law courts.

Wow. Two parallel systems of law working together. Well, these are perhaps little things, but sometimes it's necessary to take a stand against greater things, unjust laws, legislations that brings in harmful and biblical practices.

We have an enemy. There is an enemy at work. And if we forget the spiritual dimension, if we forget about spiritual warfare, it's possible to develop, I think, a persecution complex.

[14:24] You know, what on earth is happening in the world? We don't have any solution. Well, we do have a solution because the clue is the fact that there are things going on behind and we have an enemy.

Know your enemy. And we need to take this into account what is happening, what our unseen enemy is doing. And in Ephesians 6, verse 12, the next verse says, For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

Our enemy is not Islam. Our enemy is not foolish laws. Our enemy is not abortion or homosexuality. That is not the enemy. The enemy, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

That, Paul says, is the enemy. And in his letter to the Ephesians, he has taken great care to detail the blessings of what it is to be a Christian.

[15:35] His glorious grace is the theme of the first chapter. And the benefits that we have in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. His prayers are sublime, especially with the one where he wants us to know the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of Christ's love for us.

But right from the beginning, the Ephesian church was born out of trouble. There was the riot in Acts 19 after Paul had spent some time there. and they had to flee the city of Ephesus.

And then later on as he's going back to Jerusalem, he calls the elders together in Acts 20 and he warns them to be on your guard because trouble was going to come.

False teachers were on their way. And now in Ephesians chapter 6, he tells them what is behind the struggle. And it's scary, isn't it?

There are rulers and authorities. We're talking about spiritual rulers. We're talking about spiritual authorities. We're talking about powers and the forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[16:48] There is this spiritual war that's going on. So yes, Ephesians, you will ultimately perhaps have to die for your faith. Perhaps not next year or the year after, but there will come a time of great persecution.

Well, what's behind it? Our rulers, our authorities, our powers, our forces of evil. And John in his letter in 1 John 5 says, the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

We saw how controlling and manipulative Satan tried to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 4. And Jesus gloriously did not underestimate him.

He knew all about him. He was Jesus, the son of God and the son of man knew Satan before he ever walked on this earth. Let me quote from Ezekiel 28.

Principally, this is talking about the king of Tyre. But it's really a hymn about Satan and about not a hymn of praise but a poetic work regarding Satan.

[18:07] And in Ezekiel 28, the description of Satan begins with, you were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and beauty.

You were in Eden, the garden of God. That's Satan. You were anointed as a guardian cherub for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God.

You walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the days you were created till wickedness was found in you. And then it says, so I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God and I expelled you, oh guardian cherub.

And from among the fiery stones, your heart became proud on account of your beauty and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth.

This is the power that Christ had over Satan. Was Satan going to overturn Jesus in the wilderness with his temptations? It was Jesus who had thrown Satan to the earth.

[19:13] And a similar picture we find in Isaiah chapter 14. It says this, how you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn.

You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations. You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God.

I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high.

This is Satan. This is his rebellion. I will make myself like the most high, but you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Jesus was tempted, tempted with a terrible temptation, but he overcame him because he knew him, he knew the enemy, he knew the enemy of his soul.

He's an enemy who tries to outwit us. And so Paul in Corinthians says we're not unaware of his schemes. He's a one who wants to devour us.

[20:30] And so Peter says be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion because you know that your brothers resist him rather, standing firm in the faith.

He's an enemy who masquerades as light. He's an enemy who is able to look like he's good like he did in the Garden of Eden. He's an enemy who accuses us because his name means accuser.

And the Lord Jesus Christ said he is an enemy who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Satan is formidable.

So how can we defend against this enemy? How can we defend ourselves against one who was a guardian cherub once?

One who was perfect in beauty once? How can we defend ourselves against one who is so powerful and yet so wickedly cruel and wants to destroy everything that God has made?

[21:41] Paul says for though we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

We are destroying speculation and every lofty thing that raised up against the knowledge of God.

Satan the cherub wanted to say I will be like almighty God and we are destroying spiritually speaking those things and we have been told haven't we in verses 10 and 11 finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power how can we do that?

How can we defend ourselves against this enemy? Well the first thing we have to do is to know our weaponry to know our weaponry to know what it is what are the resources that we have to defend and attack this enemy and it's all here in Ephesians 6 we've told in verse 14 that we are to stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around our waist.

Belt of truth is about tying up the loose ends in our lives. The soldier wore a tunic of loose fitting cloth which was a hindrance if he wanted to march or if he wanted to fight and the belt was necessary to cinch up those loosely hanging material.

Gird up your loins if you've got the AV. Girding up was a matter of pulling in the loose ends as preparation for battle. You have to tuck in your toga.

[23:31] Right? That's what we have to do. That's what the belt of truth is about. And spiritually it's not a list of creating a list of do's and don'ts like banning TV or reading novels or should we have Christian friends or shouldn't we?

But it's about understanding how the worldly things affect us and how they need to be controlled. How self discipline is an important aspect of being a Christian.

Otherwise they subtly take over. Hebrews 12 says let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. That's a different picture. Throw it off. Here we're saying get the belt of truth and buckle it all in. Get rid of all hindrances and all things that would prevent you from living the Christian life. The belt of truthfulness is all about living a self-disciplined life in devotion to the Lord. The second thing is also in verse 14 it says put on the breastplate of righteousness with the breastplate of righteousness in place.

[24 : 44] Physical breastplate protects vital organs in the same way a bulletproof vest does. Spiritually the breastplate of righteousness is our protection against Satan's scheme.

What is it? Well it's not the righteousness that we're given as Christians when we believe. We're told that our sins are forgiven and we have the imputed righteousness of Christ given to us so we can stand before God as if we never sinned.

It's not talking about that. What it's talking about is a breastplate of righteousness that demonstrates faith and love to the Lord and one to the other.

Paul uses this breastplate of righteousness when he's writing to the Thessalonians. He says put on faith and love as a breastplate.

As a breastplate. So faith and love. Faith is that thing that enables us to be shielded against the things which would harm.

[25 : 55] It's putting on faith and love. And we find that the Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah 59 did the same thing.

The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one and he was appalled that there was no one to intercede and his own righteousness sustained him.

This is the Lord. He put on righteousness as his breastplate and the helmet of salvation on his head. God. Next thing we read of in terms of this armor of God this protection that we have is to have our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

This is what we march out with isn't it? This is the message of peace to a world at war against God. No wonder we have spiritual enemies isn't it?

Because we go out with something which is completely contrary to what the world is experiencing and knows. The message actually is for Christians to switch sides or non-Christians to switch sides.

[27 : 04] You know you're in partnership with evil and against God and the Christian message is quit God. Sorry quit evil and cling to God.

And so you know it's a wonderful message. Isaiah 52 how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say in Zion your God reigns.

So we have a message as Christians we do have this belt of truth. We've got rid of all the hindrances. We do have this breastplate of righteousness which is working out truth and love in our lives.

And then we have the message of the gospel which is to go out and tell people about it and say switch sides. Get rid of the things that you're in darkness to and put on the light of the gospel.

And the next thing we'll read of in verse 16 is this. In addition to all this take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

[28 : 22] This is to trust in God. This is what faith is. It's trusting in God. It's believing his word. And he sends us into battle. It's God who sends us into battle.

You know we need to remember that. You know we're not just oh look where I am. It's not as if you've been zoomed in. God has put us into a battle. And he will protect us through the armor that he's given us.

And he's given us this shield of faith. When we listen to the enemy. When we succumb to temptation. It's as if we lower the shield. And the arrows come straight at us.

And we'll be hurting it. Just as Adam and Eve lowered their shield. And fell into temptation. Did God say well I'm not sure. You know as soon as we start listening to the wiles of the evil one.

We shall fall. Because we'll lower our guard. Verse 17. The helmet of salvation. Take the helmet of salvation.

[29 : 25] This is a Christian assurance. In 1 Thessalonians Paul explains it as the hope of salvation. You know it's the head.

It's the thing that protects us. And that is our protection against everything the world can throw at us. Satan goes for the head. You know we all there's a film called The Sniper isn't there. You know the the sniper goes for the head because he knows if you get a hit there then you're successful in what you're doing. And Satan goes for the head. He goes for our assurance. He wants to undermine our assurance. Did you notice that in Matthew Satan said twice if you are the son of God.

If you are the son of God. And so he will attack us. He will seek to undermine our assurance by saying are you a Christian? Really?

[30 : 25] Well he goes for the head. Or rather he goes for the inside of the head. He seeks to disturb our peace. He seeks to sow doubts so that he wins the day with us.

We've got to have the helmet of salvation on us. The assurance that we have knowing that we are gods. Knowing that we are Christ. Knowing that he's put us in a battle. Knowing that he will sustain us.

And he got the helmet of salvation. It goes on and says and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. Verse 17. The only attack weapon we have is the sword of the spirit.

But it's got a keener edge than anything that Satan has. Satan may accuse us. That may be his greatest weapon against us. Or lead us into temptation.

That might feel ever so sharp. But our sword is sharper than his. It's an attack weapon. And Jesus used it didn't he in Matthew 4.

[31 : 24] You know if you are the God. Did God say. And Jesus came back and said well you know it is written you shall not test the Lord your God.

Use the word of God which is the sword of the spirit. Defeats all opposition. All attacks.

Gives guidance. Assurance. Love of God. Love for each other and grace to cover everything in our lives. We need to know the word don't we. We need to feed on it day by day.

So that's the second point. The second point is know your weaponry. Third point I've got is the fog of war. Now you might be wondering what on earth this is all about. The fog of war.

Let me just Wikipedia is wonderful. The fog of war is defined like this. The fog of war is the uncertainty in situational awareness experienced by participants in military operations.

[32 : 26] So you all got that didn't you? Everybody got that. Fog of war is the uncertainty in situational awareness experienced by participants in military operations. Well simply putting it another way it's a challenge the commander has in receiving information from what's happening in the battlefield on the ground and then translating that into new tactics and orders for the troops to follow.

It's the fog of war. When earth's going on I don't know what you're going to do about it how can I do it? It's just a confusion the first thing that happens in a battle.

Our spiritual war is different. Our spiritual war there is no fog. There's no fog because we have individual communication with the commander and the commander has individual communication with us.

and so in the middle of the battle there is no fog because we have a direct access to God himself our commander to the Lord Jesus Christ and he with us so there's no need for a radio operator or a messenger or a carrier pigeon nothing like that.

Our communication is spiritual. Our communication is prayer. And so the last piece of the puzzle is verse 18.

[33 : 50] And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Prayer. Now this week is a week of prayer isn't it? It's not really a week of prayer it's a week when we have a time of prayer every day. But it does make demand on us doesn't it?

And we are busy aren't we? And I don't know about you but sometimes in a moment I might resent it and think well I don't really want to go out on Monday night because it's raining and cold or I don't want to go out on a Wednesday night because you know that just goes on too long.

Prayer meetings are such a drag and are they really important can't I pray on my own? Does it matter? Well I find it hard to pray in prayer meetings so I won't go.

Well maybe I'll miss EastEnders or for the intellectual panorama. There are many many many barriers to prayer because prayer is key.

[35 : 06] Do you want a foggy life? Well don't pray. Do you want a foggy life? Well don't bother with reading the word of God because well it doesn't matter.

You know we're called to be alert keep on praying for all things and so it's a rebuke to all of us isn't it?

You know the John Newton hymn which says I ask the Lord that I might grow. Wonderful first line but then I always find the remaining verses to be quite a rebuke.

Have you no words? It's all about prayer. Ah think again words flow apace when you complain and fill your fellow creature's ear with the sad tale of all your care where half the breath thus vainly spent to heaven in supplication sent our cheerful song would oftener be heard what the Lord has done for me.

And that's what we're like naturally. We may be Christians but we still have the warfare in our lives. We still have the old man in us the flesh that says I can't be bothered.

[36 : 23] But we should be bothered. We should be bothered because if we're not then we will just live lives that just meander. We'll be like in the middle of a battlefield with bullets and guns and smoke and all stuff around us and we'll just be wandering aimlessly not knowing what to do.

We're to be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Wasn't it good to just pray for the fiery family?

Do we believe in prayer? Well, the Lord will sustain them in that situation. We pray for each other because we love each other. Prayer is so, so important because we have this communication with the head.

The commander is one who we can trust. He's given us all the armor we need. He's given us the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness.

He's done all these things for us, the sword of the spirit, and he's given us prayer, that communication which is so, so vital for us. Finally, who will win the war?

[37 : 42] Who will win the war? Well, you could say it's a rhetorical question. War and Peace is on TV at the moment. I haven't seen it, but if you want the spiritual equivalent of war and peace, what you need to do is read The Christian Incomplete Armor by William Gurnall.

That's it. I got to there many years ago. It's quite a difficult book to read, but what I do like is the beginning. The Christian Incomplete Armor.

A treatise of the saints' war against the devil, wherein a discovery is made of that grand enemy of God and his people in his policies, power, seat of his empire, wickedness, and chief design he has against the saints.

A magazine opened, that's an ammunition magazine, a magazine opened from whence the Christian furnished with spiritual arms of the battle, helped on with his armor, and taught the use of his weapon, together with the happy issue of the whole war.

war has a happy issue. We will win, we're on the winning side. Why are we on the winning side? Because Christ has gone before us.

[39 : 12] Christ has defeated the last enemy which is death. Last week the message was, since God is for us, who can be against us?

we will face trouble, we will face difficulties. Satan will see to that. He's going to throw stuff in our way, but nothing can separate us from the love of God.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Paul, you remember right at the beginning we had, what are we fighting against? We're fighting against rulers and authorities and powers of darkness in this world and against spiritual forces of evil.

And he says in Romans 8, well nothing's going to be able to defeat us. Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God. So that's the first thing, first reason why we win.

[40 : 28] The second one is that Jesus said so. Jesus said a time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone.

This is before the cross. Yet I am not alone for my father is with me. I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. in this world you will have trouble but take heart.

I have overcome the world. Jesus has overcome the world. And finally Jesus prayed for us. In John 17 he says this, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world.

That's not the Lord's prayer for us. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of it.

Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. We have divine protection. Christ has prayed for us that as long as we're in this world he will protect us from the evil one.

[41 : 40] There's a quotation by a man called Morris Roberts. He says this, there is only one attitude possible if we mean to get to heaven. We must wage ceaseless warfare against sin within us all the days of our lives.

That's our calling and that's the labor that we leave when we pass from this world to eternal life. But we have a God who is for us and if God is for us, who can be against us?
with us.